United Nations A/AC.109/1999/13

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 May 1999

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

American Samoa

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. General

1. American Samoa,[1] a Non-Self-Governing Territory of the United States of America, is located in the South Pacific approximately 3,700 kilometres south-west of Hawaii and 4,350 kilometres north-east of Australia. It consists of six islands (Tutuila, Aunuu, Ofu, Olosega, Tau and Rose) belonging to the Samoan group. Swains Island, 340 kilometres north of Tutuila, is administered as an integral part of American Samoa. The total land area of the Territory is 197 square kilometres, about 70 per cent of which is covered by dense forest. Lying near the Equator, between 13°E and 16°SE, American Samoa has a typical tropical climate with a wet and a dry season. Pago Pago, the capital and the site of one of the Pacific's greatest natural harbours, is located on Tutuila, the largest of the islands, where 90 per cent of the population lives.

2. American Samoa's population is growing rapidly. Its mid-year estimate for 1998 was 62,093, representing a 29 per cent increase since the 1990 census. This growth is the result of high immigration (estimated in 1998 at 4.11 per 1,000) and birth rates (2.74 per cent). Ethnically, the population breaks down into Samoan (Polynesian) (89 per cent), Caucasian (2 per cent), Tongan (2 per cent) and other groups (5 per cent). Fifty per cent of American Samoans belong to the Christian Congregationalist Church, 20 per cent are Roman Catholic and 30 per cent are Protestant and other denominations. The population speaks Samoan and English.[2] Rapid population growth places a strain on the public infrastructure and on the ability of the Government of American Samoa to provide necessary services.

3. American Samoans are United States nationals and may become naturalized United States citizens. The only substantial legal difference between a citizen and a national is that the latter, as a non-citizen, cannot vote in United States elections.

II. Constitutional and political developments

4. Information on constitutional and political developments in the Territory remained as reported in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 4–9). Since January 1981, American Samoa has elected by direct vote a non-voting delegate to the United States House of Representatives. In November 1998, the current Democratic delegate, Faleomavaega Eni Hunkin, was re-elected for a sixth term in office.[3]

III. Economic conditions

A. General

5. American Samoa suffers from the same economic constraints, such as geographical isolation, scarce resources and vulnerability to hurricanes, common to most island societies in the South Pacific. Its economy depends on the tuna fish canning industry. Prospects for agricultural development are limited owing to the small amount of land suitable for cultivation. About 93 per cent of American Samoa's economy is based on United States federal expenditures and the anning industry, while the remaining 7 per cent stems from a small tourism industry and a few businesses. Local businesses are small and sell exclusively to the local market.[4] They face high costs owing to limited access to capital and the need to import most goods and raw materials. They are also vulnerable to competition from neighbouring islands with lower wage levels and from larger, more efficient businesses in the United States.

6. The territory is characterized by a low per capita income ($3,039) and a significant unemployment rate. The garment factory, which at one time employed 700 people, was forced to close in 1998, citing problems with United States import laws and local labour recruitment.[4] However, in 1998 the local economy expanded, with 388 new businesses being licensed, especially in the construction area.[5] The largest trading partner of American Samoa remains the United States, followed by New Zealand, Australia and Fiji. Imports are mainly food (22 per cent) and petroleum products (17 per cent), machine parts, building materials, textiles and clothing; canned tuna accounts for 97 per cent of exports.

B. Public service

7. According to the State of the Territory address delivered by Governor Tauese Sunia on 11 January 1999 before the Fono (legislature), at the end of 1998 the number of employees in the Government of American Samoa reached 4,788. Over the period under review, 369 people terminated their service with the Government through retirement, death or resignation. Of that number, 319 posts have been replaced, the remaining 50 vacancies representing the Government's forced reduction. The Government has

implemented a new classification system for its employees. The system provides for 10 additional steps to the three pay scales used in public service.[5] Apart from its usual responsibilities, the Government also manages power, water and sewer systems through the American Samoa Power Authority.

8. The main business of the Government is the management and distribution of federal income and capital subsidies. Civil service workers enjoy the highest wage rates in the Territory, making government work by far the most attractive job option for American Samoans. Many American Samoans with advanced degrees from the United States return to the Territory to work for the Government. A number of expatriates also work for the Government, especially in areas such as financial services where local expertise is scarce.

9. The Territorial Government is a Government with no local or municipal sub-levels. The Government is highly centralized and performs all basic governmental functions, but its role goes well beyond the provision of basic public services such as police protection and public infrastructure. Its roots lie in the traditional communal system, where leaders are responsible not only for preserving social order but for the extended family's economic welfare as well.

C. Public finance

10. The Treasury Department reported higher revenue collection from local taxes in 1998, while the Department of Commerce announced a trade surplus of $167.9 million for the same year. The surplus is $15 million higher than in 1997.[5] In order to further improve the Government's tax collecting system, at the beginning of 1999 the United States Department of the Interior provided the Government with a $400,000 grant.[6]

11. The United States House of Representatives approved the 1999 budget for American Samoa, containing $23 million for the operations of its Government and $10.1 million for the construction of capital improvement projects. These appropriations are the same as in fiscal year 1998. The Senate Committee on Appropriations approved the level of funding for capital improvement projects and reduced the funding for operations of the Territorial Government by $230,000. At the same time, the Senate Committee restricted the use of $2 million of the capital improvement projects money pending resolution of the debts owed to Hawaiian hospitals by American Samoa and the restructuring of the off-island medical referral programme.[7]

D. Land tenure and agriculture

12. Basic information on land tenure and agriculture is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 13–15). A total of 7,277 acres of land were registered with the Territorial Registrar in 1994. About 23 per cent were designated as government-owned, 25 per cent as communal or native, 25 per cent as individually owned, 14 per cent as registered for freehold owners and 14 per cent as church land.[8] In March 1999, the Fono approved a bill prohibiting nationals from neighbouring Samoa from acquiring land in the Territory in the future. The bill also changed the definition of "native American Samoans" for purposes of land ownership to mean full-blooded American Samoans from the main islands of American Samoa. This legislation was reportedly adopted to limit land ownership because American Samoans are prohibited from owning land in neighbouring Samoa.[9]

E. Fisheries

13. In 1994 there were 44 fishing boats in the Territory and 138 fishermen; over 300,000 pounds of fish were caught (compared with only 84,000 pounds in 1993).[10] In October 1997, the first long-line fishing boat owned and operated by American Samoa was put into operation, allowing it to compete with foreign long-line fishing vessels.[11]

F. Industry

14. Information on American Samoa's tuna-processing industry is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 16–18).

15. The giant United States tuna-processing company, StarKist Samoa, based in Pago Pago, initiated negotiations with the Government of Samoa in September 1998 to build a first-stage tuna-handling facility in Apia. The facility would improve the quality of fish exported to the StarKist cannery in American Samoa and help the company to meet United States and Japanese export standards.[12]

16. In July 1997, one of the Territory's two canneries, the Samoa Packing Tuna Cannery, along with its California-based parent company, Van Camp Seafood, was sold to Tri-Union for $92 million. The three shareholders of Tri-Union are Thai Union (50 per cent), the largest seafood cannery in Asia; Tri-Marine International, one of the largest tuna-trading companies in the world; and Edward Gann, an

independent United States-flag tuna purse-seine boat owner and operator.[13]

17. Other industrial activities in American Samoa are mostly service-oriented. There are a number of small factories processing soap, perfume and alcohol. In 1994, there were 2,188 registered businesses in the Territory, a drop of 3.8 per cent from 1993, of which retail trade accounted for 874, wholesale trade for 281, service establishments for 480 and transportation for 356 businesses.[14]

18. Attracting new industries and creating employment opportunities continued to be top priorities for the Territorial Government. At the same time, in 1998, the Government of American Samoa declared its intention to draft legislation aimed at controlling and limiting foreign-owned businesses in the Territory. Under the current laws, two foreigners can set up a business corporation with one local partner. However, in many cases, according to the Government, the local partner simply collects a retainer fee, while the running of the business is left to foreigners.[15]

G. Transport and communications

19. There are approximately 150 kilometres of paved roads and 200 kilometres of secondary roads in American Samoa. In 1994, there were 5,245 registered vehicles, of which 89 per cent were privately owned. There is non-scheduled bus service. The current five-year capital improvement programme has budgeted $1.1 million for fiscal year 1998 for the village rural development programme, with lesser amounts for the following years, totalling $2.16 million for 1998 to 2002.[4] The Department of Public Works has prepared a 1997 grant application for a comprehensive roadway drainage improvement programme.

20. Information on sea links and shipping companies is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 22 and 23, and A/AC.109/2044/Add.1, paras. 41–44). The main commercial port facility in Pago Pago continues to deteriorate as a result of an inadequate maintenance budget. At present, capital improvement project funds are being sought to resurface the container yard and to develop an off-site container staging area. A port master plan, to be developed by the Port Administration, will lay the foundation for upgrading the port facilities to international standards. The Port Administration has improved the security and overall safety of the port facilities through the application of an identification badge system and a vehicle registration programme.

21. Pago Pago International Airport is owned and operated by the Territorial Government under the Department of Port Administration. It is well-maintained but needs a runway extension to allow fully loaded cargo and passenger aircraft to land and take off. The Federal Aviation Administration has already approved funding for extending the runway an additional 1,000 feet.[4] Several other airport improvement projects funded through the passenger facility charge will also be carried out. Pago Pago International Airport is regularly served by a number of airlines, which link American Samoa with Hawaii and the United States mainland, as well as with Australia, New Zealand and other countries in the South Pacific.

22. American Samoa, through the overseas communications satellite corporate link, has direct telephone dialling to most countries.

23. There are several weekly newspapers in the Territory in both the English and the Samoan languages. There is also a daily newspaper, the *Samoa News*.

H. Water system and utilities

24. Information on the water system and utilities is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2044/Add.1, paras. 29–35, and A/AC.109/2080, para. 19). The number of water meters increased in 1994 by almost 2 per cent, as more homes were connected to the government water system. Gross electricity produced in the Territory in 1994 was 125 million kilowatt-hours, an increase of about 2.5 per cent from 1993.[16]

I. Tourism

25. Information on tourism is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2080, para. 20).

J. Financial institutions

26. Information on financial institutions in American Samoa is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2044, paras. 16 and 17).

IV. Social conditions

A. Labour

27. Information on the labour force in the Territory is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 30 and 31, and A/AC.109/2044, para. 20). The labour force in the Territory, which has been increasing steadily since 1980, numbered 16,822 workers in 1994. The two largest employers are the Government and the two tuna canneries, which together provide approximately 65 per cent of the jobs.

B. Immigration

28. Information on immigration is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 32 and 33). Early in 1997, American Samoa's Governor announced an amnesty for illegal immigrants who had arrived in the Territory before 1 January 1997 if they applied for permanent resident status. In September 1997, over 2,300 residents participated in the Governor's amnesty programme, of whom a majority (1,820) were from neighbouring Samoa. As reported in the press, Governor Tauese instructed the Attorney-General to strictly enforce the immigration laws, which provide that 30-day permits can be renewed only once. After that, the visitor is mandated to leave the Territory.[17] The Governor is also seeking Fono approval of legislation upholding a five-year alien registration receipt card for alien spouses of United States nationals, permanent residents and children of United States nationals born in foreign countries. Currently, alien spouses of United States nationals must obtain a certificate of registration every year.

C. Public health

29. Information on public health is contained in a previous working paper (A/AC.109/2080, paras. 26–28).

30. The main hospital in the Territory, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Centre, has 140 beds and a staff of 25 physicians. Medical, dental and pharmaceutical services are available 24 hours a day at minimal cost to residents and visitors. For serious cases, off-island treatment, including hospitalization in Guam, Hawaii or the United States mainland, is provided free of charge.

31. As was mentioned above, a significant part of the Government's indebtedness is related to costs associated with off-island medical referrals (see para. 11). In December 1997, medical officials in the United States-affiliated Pacific islands, including American Samoa, received access to a new Internet service at the Tripler Regional Medical Centre in Honolulu, Hawaii, to facilitate medical referrals and patient consultations. The secure Web site is open to physicians and other medical personnel in the United States-administered Territories of American Samoa and Guam.[18]

32. In 1994, outpatient visits to the Centre totalled 140,345, an increase of about 2 per cent from the 1993 figure. The emergency room continued to receive the most visits (42 per cent), followed by paediatric and dental clinics.

33. Life expectancy in American Samoa is about 72 years. The infant mortality rate for 1996 was 15.2 per 1,000. The crude birth rate for the same year was 27.8, down from 38.1 in 1992. Heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease and traumas have been the leading causes of death.[4]

34. In view of the problems between the present territorial administration and the Fono regarding the establishment of the American Samoa Hospital Authority, as reported in a previous working paper (see A/AC.109/2080, paras. 26 and 27), the Governor established a five-member hospital governing board to manage the medical centre in order to release funds frozen by the federal Government until American Samoa established a hospital authority with rate-setting authorization. The funding freeze was ordered by the United States Congress in 1996. The United States Health Care Financing Administration provides about $3 million a year to the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Centre (about 16 per cent of all funding), and most of those funds are used to purchase most of the medicine and medical supplies used at the Centre.[19]

35. In September 1997, a dental health programme was launched in American Samoa's schools to combat tooth decay. A 1995 survey found that the Territory had the highest incidence of tooth decay among 12-year-olds in the South Pacific region. The new dental health programme will cover all public and private kindergartens and elementary schools.[20]

D. Crime and crime prevention

36. In 1994, a total of 2,121 offences were reported to the police, a decline of about 12 per cent compared with 1993. The most common offences were disorderly conduct, assault, burglary, larceny, drunken driving and property damage.[21] Recently, the police have recorded a significant increase in sex-related child abuse. About 88 per cent of prisoners in the

Territory are from the independent State of Samoa.[5] In 1998, Governor Tauese established the Office of Territorial and International Criminal Intelligence and Drug Enforcement, which is to operate independently of the regular police.

37. In February 1997, a new anti-drug bill was introduced in American Samoa providing for tougher penalties for drug-related crimes. The Office of Territorial and International Criminal Intelligence and Drug Enforcement is developing close cooperation with Interpol, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Customs and other federal agencies with a view to improving its readiness to combat corruption in government and drug trafficking. In a related development, the federal Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services, administered by the United States Department of Justice, announced in August 1997 a grant of $563,625 to the American Samoa Department of Public Safety. The grant can be used to pay 75 per cent of the cost of hiring additional officers for a three-year period.[22] In January 1999, The Department of Public Safety enrolled 81 police trainees for the Twenty-sixth Police Academy.[5]

E. Housing

38. In 1994, a total of 674 land-use permits were issued. There were 187 permits for new structures. The total estimated value of all construction excluding government projects, was $14 million.[23]

V. Educational conditions

39. The educational system in American Samoa is broadly based on the United States pattern of eight years' attendance in elementary school and four years' enrolment in high school. In 1998/99 academic year, enrolment in public schools alone reached 16,104 students.

40. The American Samoa Community College, established in 1970, offers two-year degree courses in arts and sciences and programmes offering certificates of proficiency in vocational and clerical skills, business and nursing. At the end of 1994, the College had more than 1,400 students. In the 1998/99 academic year, the College's enrolment reached an all-time low of about 770 students.[24]

41. In June 1997, the United States Department of Education's Literacy Challenge Fund awarded American Samoa a grant of $240,930 to improve computer facilities at schools. The grant will be used to provide students with CD-ROM capability and worldwide Internet access.

VI. Participation in international organizations and arrangements

42. Information on American Samoa's participation in international organizations and arrangements is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 40–43).

VII. Future status of the Territory

43. In a statement made in 1993, the Lieutenant-Governor of American Samoa indicated that American Samoa preferred to remain a Territory of the United States (see A/AC.109/1159, paras. 25–31). This position remains unchanged. In February 1999, the United States Government appointed former Hawaii governor John Waihee to head an economic advisory commission to suggest policies for expansion and diversification of the Territory. Its primary task is to develop a detailed plan that would bring self-sufficiency to American Samoa.[25]

44. On 8 October 1997, in his statement to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), the representative of the United States said that circumstances unique to the situation of each particular Non-Self-Governing Territory should be considered. There were various legitimate forms of self-government short of full independence that benefited the people of both the administering Power and the Non-Self-Governing Territory.

45. On 27 October 1997, in another statement made to the Fourth Committee in connection with the consideration by the Committee of a draft resolution on small Non-Self-Governing Territories, including American Samoa, the representative of the United States proposed a correction to the draft resolution. He recalled that the original consensus resolution had begun with two preambular paragraphs that read:

> "*Noting* the report by the administering Power that most of the American Samoan leaders had expressed satisfaction with the island's present relationship with the United States of America"

and

> "*Noting also* the non-participation of representatives of the peoples of American Samoa in the last two regional seminars".

In his view, given the importance of recognizing the point of view of the people of the Territory, their understanding of their current situation and the evolution of their notion of

self-determination, he felt it important to maintain the original two preambular paragraphs, which took into account the views of the American Samoan leaders.

46. On 3 November 1997, the Rapporteur of the Special Committee proposed revisions to the draft resolution on small Non-Self-Governing Territories, which included the aforementioned corrections proposed by the representative of the United States with regard to the section on American Samoa. At the same meeting, the omnibus draft resolution on small territories was approved by the Fourth Committee without a vote, as orally revised (see A/C.4/52/SR.6, 7, 9 and 11).

47. On 3 December 1998, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 53/67 B, a consolidated resolution on 10 Non-Self-Governing Territories, section I of which is devoted specifically to American Samoa (see A/53/PV.78).

Notes

[1] The information contained in the present working paper was derived from published sources.

[2] *World Fact Book* 1997, Central Intelligence Agency.

[3] *Samoa News*, 4 November 1998.

[4] Submission by the United States of America on American Samoa, April 1999.

[5] *Samoa News*, 15 January 1999.

[6] Ibid., 9 March 1999.

[7] Ibid., 24 July 1998.

[8] *American Samoa Statistical Digest* 1995, p. 91.

[9] Agence-France Presse, 31 March 1999 (NEWSEDGE).

[10] *American Samoa Statistical Digest* 1995, p. 173.

[11] Pacific Islands Development Project, 14 October 1997.

[12] *Samoa News*, 16 September 1998.

[13] Ibid., 11 July 1997.

[14] *American Samoa Statistical Digest* 1995, p. 205.

[15] *Samoa News*, 2 December 1998.

[16] *American Samoa Statistical Digest* 1995, p. 212.

[17] *Samoa News*, 27 August 1998.

[18] Pacific Islands Development Project, 24 December 1997.

[19] *Samoa News*, 2 and 13 September 1997.

[20] *PACNEWS*, 28 September 1997.

[21] *American Samoa Statistical Digest* 1995, pp. 74 and 75.

[22] *Samoa News*, 26 August 1997.

[23] *American Samoa Statistical Digest* 1995, p. 91.

[24] *Samoa News*, 20 April 1999.

[25] Reuters, 12 February 1999.